

The route to 'Interdependence'

Alan Beckley describes the components of the M7 training programme for senior managers.

The M7 Executive Leadership Programme's grand title started life as a gleam in the mind of the author circa 1999. At that time I was the head of management development training in West Mercia Constabulary and was responsible for the training and development of about 600 police and support staff managers. Several senior managers at superintendent level asked me to deliver a training and development programme to provide them with knowledge and understanding of strategic management and also enhance their operational management and interpersonal relationship skills. Although the usual route for senior managers was to attend the national police staff college for their training needs, it was perceived that nothing on offer at that time was suitable for their requirements.

The detail of the programme design and subsequent delivery was conceived in partnership with Jan Childs, Managing Director of MDP Management Consultancy Ltd. In this sense it could be argued that it is a successful example of a public/private sector partnership.

Problems surrounding delivery

Once the original concept had been established, stakeholders crowded in to list many and varied criteria which they required of the programme: "it must not be too long", "it must not unduly distract busy and influential managers away from their vital functions and core roles", "it should not be too bureaucratic", "it must show real added value" and many others. However, we overcame all objections and commenced delivery of the first programme with 13 participants, mostly police and support staff managers. Out of that cohort, 12 delegates completed the programme within the time frame we had allowed and one person was deferred to a subsequent programme. We have subsequently held two further successful programmes and opened the course up to managers in private industry and from the armed forces.

The programme is designed not only to provide a sound knowledge and understanding of leadership, management and emotional intelligence concepts and theories, but also to be able to apply them at a strategic level within one part-time course: a tall order for trainers and delegates. It is delivered over eight months in evening workshop sessions and delegates are expected to complete set reading between sessions so that they can discuss the issues at the facilitated workshops with the aid of pre-set

questions. The workshops tend to be lively, energising wide-ranging discussions, with many divergent views passionately argued. The programme revolves around three main texts, but is closely mapped and linked to the MCI Level 5 Strategic Management standards. One of the texts focuses on effective personal management skills, the second on emotional intelligence and the third on strategic management.

The schedule of the M7 programme included workshops on the themes of establishing organisational and personal strategies; vision, mission and values; paradigm alignment - a different approach to time management; interpersonal leadership and the 'emotional bank account'; autobiographical responses; team synergy - principles of creative co-operation and interdependence dimensions.

The idea of 'emotional intelligence' was central to the programme. Considering these descriptions of emotional intelligence shows it to be an essential attribute in police managers: "The ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, connection and influence" (Cooper and Sawaf 1997). "The ability to perceive, to integrate, to understand and reflectively manage one's own and other people's feelings" (Mayer and Salovey 1997).

NVQ qualification

Delegates are also given the opportunity to elect to work towards the MCI Level 5 Strategic Management NVQ. The M7 programme uses an abbreviated form of the usual NVQ portfolio and also some assessments are completed in the workplace with a minimum of bureaucracy and administration. The programme culminates in a panel interview for each delegate that is chaired by an executive officer of the police service. At this point, the programme is internally and externally verified and evaluated for learning outcomes and changes to individual management styles/approaches as a result of the course.

Outcomes and comments

The learning outcomes from the programmes can best be illustrated by directly quoting some of the participating delegates: "the programme reinforced the need for value driven leadership and management and a concentration on people skills", "reflection on seeking to understand first helped with situations including union negotiations, understanding staff and



Thanks to the Metropolitan Police for access to police training at the Peel Centre at Hendon, where the photos in this issue were taken.

'Best Value' review application", "from participation in the programme, I learnt to develop more sensitivity to people issues", "the programme recognised the need to invest in and develop people - and put people first".

The highest level of evaluation of any training course is that of changes of behaviour in the workplace; in this context, changes in management practice. Participants described the changes in their own performance and attitudes: "a change in my approach and more understanding of other people's views", "more effective in dealing with strategic issues", "our previous hierarchical, disciplined culture is now more open and more into leadership rather than management", "my senior management role has come late in my career - whilst previous management development has been useful, the M7 programme has provided a more strategic way of looking at things", "more focus on identifying problems before taking decisions by listening to understand rather than to respond".

Chief police officers have also thoroughly endorsed the M7 Executive Leadership programme by saying: "I am actively promoting it as best practice and would regard it increasingly as a pre-condition for senior management." The M7 Executive Leadership programme assists senior managers to develop themselves on the journey Steven Covey defined as through the route of 'dependence' via 'independence' and finally on to 'interdependence'.

Alan Beckley is Business Development Manager in West Mercia Constabulary and was a police officer for thirty years. He previously worked as head of management development training as a manager, trainer and internal consultant, mainly in public sector law enforcement, and has also completed external consultancy projects with nine police forces in the UK and five other countries. He has written several books and is the Managing Editor of two quarterly professional journals: *Police Research & Management* and *Professional Consultancy*. E-mail address: Abeckley@aol.com

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